

Jocelyn Anne Rankin, PhD, FMLA, 1946–2010



Jocelyn Rankin died on September 19, 2010, at her Florida home after an extended battle with cancer. At the time of her death, Jocelyn was chief of the Information Center at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a position she held since early 2000.

While at the CDC, she oversaw the transformation of the CDC Library into a national and international public health library and information center, delivering information and services to the desktops of public health officers wherever they are located through the CDC electronic information delivery system. The creation of this system also was instrumental in the integration of several autonomous center libraries into one coherent network.

Transformative leadership was not something new to Jocelyn. In 1974, she joined the faculty of the newly established Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM) to create and direct its medical library. This undertaking, perhaps, was the source of her mantra “that every challenge is an opportunity.” Whatever the source, it remains a phrase forever linked to Jocelyn by those lucky enough to have worked with her at Mercer, and she proved the truth of the saying many times over. Under her leadership, in 1977, the new library became the first MUSM department to receive federal grant funding. In 1983, Jocelyn was awarded a three-year grant from the National Library of Medicine (NLM) to create the Georgia Interactive Network for Medical Information (GaIN), the largest grant NLM had made up to that time. As a testament to Jocelyn’s foresight and planning, GaIN still exists in 2011 as the oldest statewide network of its kind in the United States.

While at Mercer, Jocelyn became an active proponent of librarian involvement in problem-based medical education (PBL), the subject of her doctoral research [1]. She cofounded a Medical Library Association (MLA) special interest group devoted to PBL and taught a popular MLA continuing education course on the subject. Throughout the 1990s, she published articles on the topic, culminating in 1999 with the publication of her book, *Handbook on Problem-based Learning* [2].

Jocelyn had a long association with NLM, serving on the NLM Biomedical Library Review Committee when she was at Mercer and more recently as a member of NLM’s “Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce” initiative, whose mission was to help the public health workforce find and use information effectively to improve and protect the public’s health. She also participated in the NLM Public Health Outreach Forum.

However, it was as a teacher, mentor, and MLA leader, that she will be most remembered. From her first days as a medical librarian at the Medical College of Georgia to her last as a library director at the CDC, Jocelyn was committed to professional involvement at the local, regional, and national levels. She was a member of the MLA Board of Directors from 1999 to 2002, served on numerous MLA committees, chaired the Research Section, served on the 1995 MLA Research Policy Implementation Task Force, and was a major contributor to the research policy’s revision in 2008. She received several prestigious awards, including the Ida and George Eliot Prize and the Thomson Reuters/Frank Bradway Rogers Information Advancement Award. In 1990, she achieved Distinguished Member status in the Academy of Health Information Professionals and was named a Fellow of MLA in 2002.

Her heart was in the South, and MLA’s Southern Chapter was her

professional home. She served as chair of the chapter and as chair of a number of its committees, including the Southern Chapter’s Research Committee, which she founded.

Jocelyn was always committed to research and was an early practitioner of evidence-based librarianship. Near the end of Jocelyn’s career, she spent a year on sabbatical at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), participating in research related to emerging roles for librarians, focusing in particular on the role of informationist, or librarian in context. Several articles came out of this experience, but the systematic review of the literature she conducted during that time stands as the most comprehensive examination of how this role has been interpreted and has evolved to date [3].

Jocelyn was born in Raleigh, North Carolina. As the daughter of a colonel in the US Army, she lived abroad, attending schools in both the United States and Europe, including the American College in Paris. She received a bachelor’s degree cum laude in English from Hollins College in Virginia, a master’s of librarianship degree from Emory University in Atlanta, and a doctoral degree in educational leadership from Georgia State University. She was a product of the South, and like many Southern women, Jocelyn’s warmth and grace were more obvious, but not more prevalent, than her strength of mind and character. Jocelyn leaves behind many who were privileged to know her as a friend and colleague. She is survived by her husband, William Rankin; her daughters, Stephanie Smith and Kimberly Macdonald; her son, William Rankin III; her three grandchildren; and her brother Howell Cobb.

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